

4.13
*Some special Methods of honouring God
considered.*

IN A ^{12^a}
S E R M O N

Preached at

St. Mary's Church

On TUESDAY *July* 21, 1730.

AT THE

A S S I S E S

HELD IN

C A M B R I D G E.

Before the Right Honourable

Lord Chief Justice EYRE,

And the Honourable

Mr. Justice DENTON. *R.*

By **ROBERT LEEKE**, B. D. Fellow of
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L O N D O N:

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I SAMUEL ii. 30.

*Them that honour me, I will honour, and
they that despise me, shall be light-
ly esteem'd.*



THE Words before us, were spoken to *Eli*, by a Prophet sent from God, with a Complaint of an Injury done to his Honour, by his two Sons *Hophni* and *Phinebas*, whose Crime was, that they had violated the Rules which God had prescribed for the Oblation of Sacrifices at his Altar; not content with the Portions allotted to the Priest, they took likewise the Part which God had reserved for himself.

In order to judge of this Piece of Wickedness, committed by the Children of the High-Priest, we must attend to the many Acts of Religion, united to the Oblation of the ancient Sacrifices to God. By these the People express'd the divine Sovereignty over them and their Possessions. By these Modes of Worship they intreated his Mercy, and derived all the Blessings of the Covenant subsisting between God and themselves: When therefore

the two young Priests eat that Part of the Sacrifice which God had reserved for himself, what did they less than reject the Authority of God over them, and break his Covenant in a most prophane Manner? This is plain to every one who is acquainted with the many solemn Acts of Religion offered up thro' the ancient Sacrifices to God; with what the sacramental eating thereof imported, or will attend to the Punishment which God inflicted upon the House of *Eli*, in Resentment of this Fact. On this Profanation of Religion, by the Sons of *Eli*, God sent a Prophet to expostulate with the Father. Before the Message arrived, *Eli* had reprov'd his Children; but this it seems was not enough, for the Father was a civil Judge at that Time in *Israel*, as well as High-Priest, and God expected that he, who had the supreme Authority, both spiritual and temporal, in all Affairs, should have used that Authority which God had given him in vindicating his Honour by some publick Resentment.

And there came a Man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did not I appear unto the House of Eli thy Father, when they were in Egypt; and did not I choose him out of all the Tribes of Israel to be my Priest, to burn Incense and offer upon mine Altar? And did not I give unto the House of thy Father all the Offerings made by Fire, of the Children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye now at my Sacrifice, and at my Offering, which I have commanded, and honourest thy Sons above me, to make your selves fat with the choicest of all the Offerings of Israel my People. Wherefore the
Lord

Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy Family should walk before me for ever; but now, saith God, Be it far from me, for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed. The Case of *Eli's* Family was very particular, for he was not descended from the eldest Branch of the House of *Aaron*, but was prefer'd by God's own Appointment, before the eldest Branch, because that Part of the Family had neglected the Care of his Religion. On the same Account we see God threatening a most deplorable Calamity upon him and his People, no less than an utter Extinction of his Family and the Loss of the Ark itself, and with it all the Covenant-Right, he and his People had to expect the Blessings of Heaven; without it no Religion, civil Peace, or Safety in this World, no Hopes of Happiness hereafter; which soon after came to pass, when the Ark was taken by the *Philistines*, his two Sons killed, at the Report of which the old Man instantly expired.

Such a dreadful Curse did God bring upon his People *Israel*, for a Neglect of Duty in their Governor, thro' a Breach of a positive Command: Which should teach some Writers of very modern Divinity amongst us, not to lessen the Value of God's positive Commands; for no Punishment could be greater than that before us, which must lead us to judge that such Commands are of high Value in the Sight of God.

Of this Kind was *Adam's* Crime, which cursed him and all his Posterity, 'till an Instance of Obedience in the Son of God to the Father, not necessarily required, I presume, by the eternal Relatic

tion of Things, recovered the World again thro' his meritorious Sufferings for us.

But my Design is not to enter into this Subject; what I would observe at present from it is, that God complained that his Honour was injured by the Judge of *Israel*, in that he did not put a Stop to Prophanation of his Religion, by some exemplary punishment; or as it is expressed in Chap. iii. *ſ. 13. When the Sons of Eli were become thus vile in the Sight of God, the Judge restrained them not.*

In the Prosecution of this Subject I shall presume to consider what Authority there is in holy Scripture, to think that God expects from the civil Magistrate, that he should interpose by civil Punishment, for the Protection and Honour of his Religion.

But before I enter into this Argument, my Text leads me to consider,

I. What is meant by the general Expression of honouring God.

II. By what Methods this may be suitably performed.

III. I shall consider the particular Method of honouring God, expected from the civil Magistrate, in giving due Protection to Religion, and punishing the Subverters of it.

I. I am to consider what is meant by the general Expression of honouring God.

Honour, as it passes in the Apprehensions of Mankind, is capable of so many different Meanings,
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that was I to mention the several Notions of Mankind about it, many of them would appear not resolvable into Principles of Reason, but the arbitrary Humours of licentious Men; whereas true Honour, paid to another, must be an inward Esteem of something intrinsically excellent, join'd with a proper Way of openly testifying it.

An inward Esteem in this Case is not sufficient, because it is of the very Nature of this Tribute, that it should be publick: Nor are publick Acknowledgements of any Value, without an inward Esteem passing in the Mind of him that gives them; without a publick Testimony nothing is paid, without the other it is Insincerity, and therein an Affront to the Person, to whom such Incense is offer'd.

There is nothing, that I know of, in the World, that hath a Title to true Honour, but Power, Wisdom, Goodness; these have an intrinsick Value in them, for Power is more excellent and useful than Weakness, Wisdom than Folly, Goodness than Wickedness. These are self-evident Truths, and he who does not acknowledge them to be such, is either stupid, or if he does know it, and will not pay the Honour that is due to them, denies in Fact Things to be what they are, and therein may be charged in the Want of such Respect, with a Breach of Justice and Truth.

Tho' these Excellencies may each be distinctly considered, yet Goodness rightly understood, is the Effect of the other two, and must be ever join'd with them. Hence it is, that not only the inspired Penmen, but all Men of cool and sober
 Reflexion

Reflexion, have left it upon Record in their Writings, that Goodness is the true Greatness, and the truest Wisdom; and when they have drawn out the beautiful Parts of a good Man's Character, they have recommended him to the World, as the only great and wise Man: In such Writings, for the same Reason, are constantly joined Weakness, Folly and Wickedness together.

From this Notion of Honour, being an outward Testimony of an inward Esteem to be paid to Things only in their own Natures intrinsically excellent, we easily ascend into the Knowledge of this plain Truth, That God is most worthy of supreme Honour, as he is the Foundation of all Perfection, and the Origine of every Excellence distributed in so many Proportions thro' all created Nature. I am to enquire,

II. *Secondly*, By what Methods this Honour may be suitably offered up to God, by his Creatures.

Every Man, that can think at all, must think that God is worthy of the highest Honour and Adoration, yet the Method wherein Man should express this honour due to God was not so easily settled; because the Manner of paying such religious Tribute must be first regulated by the Knowledge Men had of God, and such Knowledge of him, must have arisen, in a great Measure, from the gradual Discoveries he has been pleased to make of himself, to his Creatures, in different Ages of the World. As the Scripture teaches us, that God made Man for himself *, so he impress'd such

* Col. i. 16.

Marks from the Beginning upon all his Works, that Man must ever be without Excuse, if he did not acquire from thence, a Disposition to admire him above all Things, thro' the great Power, Wisdom, Goodness open'd therein, with so much Majesty and Beauty around him, and to love and worship him for their beneficial Influence deriv'd upon himself.

Had God not instituted amongst the Sons of Men, some publick Methods of doing Honour to himself, yet Love to God, would have inspired the Hearts and Tongues of truly grateful Men, to have attempted some open and public Method of devout Acknowledgment to their great Benefactor, for all his Blessings conferr'd upon them.

I think Nature herself seems to speak within us, for some higher Acts of Acknowledgment, than the Payment only of devout Language, that we should find out a Way of *honouring the Lord with our Substance, with the best of what we have, and not to offer that only, which costs us nothing**. Should we then offer up the richest Sacrifices of Bulls and of Goats, or the best Fruits of the Ground: Either of them or both, a truly grateful Heart would readily do; but then our Reason could not determine without an express Command, that God would be pleas'd with taking away the Lives of his Creatures, or that an Oblation of Fruits of the Earth could be an Act of Devotion to God, because he wants nothing that we have, and all that we have is already his own. Here then Nature unassisted, would be at a Stand, waiting with the

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Pro. iii. 9.

greatest Desire to know the Commands of God, without which, as far as I can judge, she could not, even in a State of Innocence, have known how to have offered up to God, with any Confidence, an acceptable Tribute of Gratitude for all the Mercies of Heaven conferred upon us.

So little Pretence has *the Religion of Nature*, to the Name of a perfect Religion, that by it we should never have known how to have perform'd the very first Act of all Religion; I mean that of giving suitable Thanks to Heaven for the divine Blessings conferr'd upon us.

I doubt not but herein the first Man was taught of God; that Man received express Instruction from God, how to acknowledge the divine Sovereignty over him, by some appointed Act of Devotion: For it can be proved, that *Adam*, before the Fall, was assisted with divine Grace; and God's blessing the Sabbath Day, which is one of the oldest Pieces of Religion in the World, makes it highly probable, that God appointed some open Method, wherein Man should testify, on that Day, his Thanks to Almighty Power and Goodness, for his Works of Creation.

And therefore, he who will pay no Reverence to the Sabbath, or what is worse, falls in with a most abominable Fashion of insulting the very Institution of it, denies virtually that God made the World, of which this Day was appointed the Memorial. And since the Sabbath, under the Christian Institution is commemorative of the greatest Blessing that ever was vouchsafed to sinful Man, I mean the *new Creation of the World by Jesus*

Jesus Christ; not to dedicate this holy Season to pious Meditation; not to join in the publick Thanks of the rest of Mankind for these signal Manifestations of divine Goodness; what does such an one do less than despise them? And by openly insulting the Religion of the Day, he plainly ridicules the Belief, That God has either created or redeemed the World. One would imagine, by the present Practice of Numbers amongst us, that this Crime was not generally understood; 'tis plainly you see, not Deism only, but downright Atheism, and therefore the Breach of the Sabbath was punished with Death, by the wisest Body of Laws that ever were given to the World. But to proceed.

Whether Sacrifices of slain Beasts, or Fruits of the Ground, or both, were offered up to God, before the Fall, in token of the divine Sovereignty over the World, we cannot certainly tell; for we find no Institution either of Prayer or Sacrifice in the Books of *Moses*; but I think one or both probably was, for they are both related in the Old Testament, as Principles and Articles of Religion universally known and practis'd from the Beginning of the World. We read *Gen. iv. 3, 4. In process of Time, it came to pass that Cain brought of the Fruit of the Ground, an offering to the Lord: And Abel he brought of the Firstlings of his Flock. Instead of Process of Time, the Original has it, at the End of Days*; which *End of Days*, why might it not be on the Sabbath-Day, the last of the Days in the Week, then lately sanctify'd by God, to the Honour of himself in the Creation of the

World. On this Day *Cain* might bring the Fruits of the Ground, in Testimony of his Thanks to God, according to God's Appointment; and because he did not bring with it the Firstlings of his Flock, as a Rite of Atonement for his Sins, we see God would accept no religious Service from him: Why then, it may be ask'd, did not *Cain* bring this Rite of Atonement, as *Abel* did? The probable Account of it is, he, like our modern Deists, rely'd upon his own well doing, as we read from the Expostulation of God with him; whilst *Abel* rely'd upon the Atonement for Sin, provided by God, and was accepted. Of this Kind was the Faith of *Abel* and all those great Men recorded in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, who are gone up to Heaven, evermore to dwell with God. And if there is any Truth in the Gospel Revelation, no one must expect to come thither, but by a true Faith like theirs, which was a Reliance on the positive Institutions reveal'd by God, join'd with the one great Propitiation for the Sins of the World. From the Fall of Man, we find God entering into Covenant with Man, the Terms of which has been in all Ages the same, Man accepted in it thro' Faith, *i. e.* a Reliance on the reveal'd Word of God. And if we consider, must not we judge, that had not God graciously pleased to have instituted some Method of Reconciliation for Sinners, for want of it, thro' the Sins of Men, all true Religion had ceased in the World?

For the Sins of Men, according both to Reason and Revelation, must make God offended with them: In such a Case I desire to know how Hope,
Love

Love or Joy towards God, can arise in us, 'till he shall please to reveal the Terms of our Reconciliation with him. We cannot hope for Success in our Prayers, nor lift up our Hearts in any Kind of Praises to him; we cannot thank him for Creation, 'till we are sure he will not punish that Life he has given us, in Misery, for our Sins. In such a State of Things, nothing but Darknefs, Sorrow and Melancholy lies before us, and with it all holy Correspondence with God, is dissolved. As Sin thus puts an End to all our Trust in God, to all our Happiness both here and hereafter, 'till God shall offer the Terms of our Acceptance with himself: So these gracious Terms being fix'd thro' *Jesus Christ*, 'tis beyond all Exception clear, that God will accept no Act of Adoration or religious Honour offer'd up to him, but by the Merits of *Jesus Christ*; without his Assistance no Salvation is to be expected: Thro' him all the ancient Sacrifices were accepted with God, and thro' him evermore must all religious Worship have Access to the Father. His Covenant is truly called the Covenant of Grace, for by it alone we can, with a just Confidence approach the Throne of God, from whence all Blessings are to descend upon us thro' his Intercession.

If Men could be brought to consider seriously the Nature of Sin, how much Injustice and Ingratitude there is in it; how much Contempt it argues towards God; how contrary to every Notion of our best Reason: They must judge upon every cool Reflexion, that no Blessing in the World can be so great, no Act of Benevolence so
 extensive

extensive as to have the Pardon of their Sins infallibly secured to them: And if the Means of Reconciliation with God was purchased by the Intercession of a powerful Friend, who is highly honoured by God, and who was able to manifest the Evidences of this Reconciliation beyond all Contradiction, I cannot help thinking, that that Man is grossly stupid, or downright mad, who does not of all Things accept the Offer with the utmost Gratitude, and highly honour the Person who was able to procure so invaluable a Blessing for them.

Such Sentiments as these, which Reason teaches every Man, lead us directly to embrace the Christian Covenant, which is nothing more than a Dispensation of the highest Benevolence in God towards Man, not now represented in Creation and Preservation, but pardoning their Sins, and preserving them from eternal Misery, united to the highest Instances of Obedience expected in Proportion from them. In one Word, The Mystery of our Redemption being full of the highest Benefits to us, that the most sovereign and godlike Love can bestow; 'tis proposed to us on the most equitable and gracious Terms in the World, the only loving him above all Things for it.

Men do not ordinarily want Parts and Learning to see these plain Truths, but then Men of Parts and Learning grow conceited of their vain Philosophy, they want an humble Spirit, which seldom dwells in the Breast of the Philosopher; and there is so much Pride generally mingled with human Reason, that the greatest Admirers of it seem to think that they want not the Grace of God, for
want

want of which, we are taught by God and our own too frequent Experience, Men will never obtain a true Relish for that divine Wisdom which came down from above.

Philosophy is, indeed, a fine Amusement to the Mind, and has yielded some Help to Religion; it has illustrated the Power and Wisdom of God in Creation and Preservation; but then here it stops, it affords no certain Rule of Duty, no Hopes of Pardon for Sinners, no Heaven for the Reward of an imperfect Obedience, and therefore can never beget in us an heavenly Disposition of Mind. Here then let us adore the Goodness of God, for that highest Miracle of his Love, proposed by the Death of his Son: 'Tis such a glorious Manifestation of himself, as has more than answer'd all the Hopes and Expectations of sinful Man from his great Creator.

The Redemption of the World from Sin, and a Covenant-Right to eternal Happiness are the never failing Springs of yielding supreme Honour to God, and endless Comfort to ourselves. Let us reverently read, and ever delight ourselves in those Holy Scriptures that have filled up the Glory of the Godhead, with such a Plenitude of Goodness and Mercy to Man, from whence we are taught most truly to honour him, not from the awful Notions of his Power, but by filling our Devotion with the highest Sentiments of Love to him. As we are created over again unto good Works by *Jesus Christ*, justify'd freely by his Grace, and to be finally blessed by his undeserved Mercy, let us carefully remember to put away from us all Boasting

ing of our selves, for it is not our own Counsel that hath done it, *it is the Gift of God*, concluding all our Addresses to him, as he has most justly taught us, saying, *Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever.*

These are the general Sentiments of Love and Honour which our holy Religion teaches us towards the great original of all Power, Wisdom and Goodness in the World. I shall proceed farther, to observe some special Methods pointed out to us by our holy Religion, of doing Honour to God; which tho' as clearly deducible from the Scriptures as the former, yet great Numbers amongst us, do not seem to think that the Honour of God is promoted by the Observance of them.

First then, I should observe that Kings, and all that are in Authority, are enjoined to give all due Encouragement to God's true Religion, to adorn it by their own Example, and to protect it by civil Authority: This God expects from them in Return for that Authority which he gives them, and which can never be exerted in so godlike a Manner, as when employ'd to encourage true Religion, to degrade Vice and Prophaneness, and to make them appear in the World, as they really are, base and contemptible.

We, whose Duty it is to obey the King, must submit to his Authority in the Execution of such Laws, learning from our holy Religion to honour him, as bearing the Scepter of God upon Earth, constituted by him to derive the Blessings of civil Society upon us. And when Princes do thus use their Authority, in Protection of God's People,
and

and supporting the Religion of him whose Name, whose Power, whose Office in Heaven he sustains upon Earth; and when the People do chearfully obey their Prince, not thro' a slavish Fear of his Punishment, but out of Conscience thro' their Duty to God; then are both King and People declared in Scripture to do Honour to God himself: For whilst the Prince lends his Authority in giving the utmost Encouragement to our holy Religion, the People will pay all due Honour to their Prince, which Honour is reflected back upon the Divinity of God himself, deriv'd upon and shining in him.

And altho' God does not think fit to make choice of the several Governors of the World under him, by the special Designation of Prophets, as he did of old, many Times, to his peculiar People *Israel*; therefore the Laws of every Country must regulate the Choice of a royal Person and Family for themselves; yet what every one, that believes the holy Scriptures, will continue to think is, that all the Power is from God, and therefore the Power they are invested with, comes from God. Accordingly the Church of *England* teaches all those in Communion with her, to obey the King *for God's Sake*, adding this to be her Judgment, *according to God's blessed Word and Ordinance*.

Upon the same principle of honouring God does our holy Religion teach us to honour those who *are sent* or entrusted with Power *by the King*; and we are told, in so many express Words, that the Decisions they give, under the View of promoting Religion and the good Order of Government, is the Judgment of God: As they are called *Gods upon Earth*, this should teach them to be no Re-

specter of Persons, for this is God's own Account of himself; and without doubt, should they ever give wrong Judgment, under any sinister View, or private Regard to the Persons of Men, this is at once to defecrate the holy Station, and dishonour the God of Truth, in whose Place they stand, by a delusive and wicked Behaviour.

As it is the Duty of Mankind to honour Princes and all that are in Authority under them, *for God's Sake*, for the same Reason should both King and People unite in offering to the Priest the Honour due unto him. The Mission of the Priest is from the holy *Jesus*, as *Jesus* was from God the Father, and the Blessings that are derived upon the People by him, are deriv'd from God, by him, for his Son's Sake.

God hath constituted the King and the Priest his Representatives upon Earth, the one to dispense temporal Peace and Felicity, the other spiritual Grace and Instruction. *By their Hands*, says a judicious and vigilant Prelate of our Church, *are the holy Ordinances of the Christian Religion administered; by their Tongues is the Word of God explained and enforced; they are chosen of God, as was Aaron, to preach to and pray for the People, to bless them in the Name of God *, to administer Grace, to seal his Covenant; in a Word, to apply all those spiritual Means of Reconciliation, which God derives upon the People thro' the Gospel Covenant; for as the Grace of God is promis'd only within the Pale of his Church, so he who refuses to come into this Church, or turns Apostate from it, or despises the Ordinances of God, by which this*

* Eccclus. xlv. 15.

Grace is derived, has no Reason to expect it; for God will certainly honour his own Institutions, and every Contempt thrown upon the Authority of Christian Priests, *Jesus Christ* hath told us, he will judge to be done to himself, who left them in Commission from himself, on purpose to execute so much of his own mediatorial Office, as was necessary in all Ages to be performed upon Earth, whilst he executes the other Part in Heaven for us. The Christian Priest thus consecrated to his Office, by the Authority of God, asks for Protection from the civil Power in the Execution of it. When he asks for such a Maintenance as is suitable to his holy Character, he is authorised to ask it in the Name of his Master *Jesus Christ*. And this we are sure of, that every true Believer will discharge the Duty he owes to the Ministers of holy Things, with the utmost Chearfulness, when he is duly sensible of the Honour he owes to *Jesus Christ*, and of the many inestimable Benefits he receives thro' their Ministry from the Christian Institution; for there is no Man that sincerely believes in the Christian Religion, and truly considers the Nature of the priestly Office, but must highly esteem a Christian Priest for his Commission and his Work's sake: And tho' they are despised and rejected in the World, many Times, yet this is not carried by Reason, but by the Vote of a corrupt Generation of Men. True Religion, and its pious Ministers can have but one Interest, and ought therefore to be ever one in Esteem in the World; but when Mankind become either wicked in their Morals, or Infidels in Opinion, I allow they are then consistent with themselves, when they despise the pious Ministers of the Christian Religion;

but for Men to pretend to believe Christianity and condemn a Christian Priest, acting up to his Character, is a manifest Contradiction: For is it not impossible to believe that *Jesus Christ sent* the Ministers of his Gospel, and not highly honour, and chearfully reward the Persons sent by him? Is it not impossible to honour the Son for reconciling us to God, and not to honour the Priest to whom this Ministry of Reconciliation is committed? And tho' I see many Marks of Apostasy from the Christian Faith, in great Numbers amongst us, yet none is a surer Sign of it, than the Disesteem of the Clergy, none more effectual to bring Religion into Discredit; for if it once should become a general Doctrine, that the Mission of the Priest is not from God, the next Step will be to reject that Ministry, to despise what they preach, and to persuade the People, that the Doctrine they inculcate is not from God, but their own Invention. As it is a great Honour done to sinful Men, to be the Dispensers of this heavenly Doctrine to the People, so least the People should conceive any wrong Apprehension of their Doctrine, thro' a mean Opinion of their Order, it seems to be their Duty, at some Seasons, to lay before them the Excellence and Use of the Commission they have received from the great Author of their Religion, following herein the great Example of the Apostle *St. Paul*, who took care prudently to instil into the Hearts of his Disciples, a due Sense of his holy Commission along with his heavenly Doctrine. But if after all their pious Endeavours to benefit Mankind, they still meet with rude Treatment, they must call to Mind the Words of their dying Master, who told them, that *the Servant must not expect to be*

be above his Lord; that when they had first despised him, they would of course reject his Ministers; and learn from thence to follow his Patience for the great Joy that is set before them hereafter.

As I am considering the several Ways by which we are taught to honour God in the World, so we are led both by Nature and Revelation to judge, that whenever the Power, the Wisdom, or the Goodness of God is derived upon, or copied by the Creature, so far the Creature is intitled to proportionate Degrees of Respect: This is not to deify the Creature, but to refer the Merit and the Honour back to him from whom it descended.

In this Sense human Nature is truly honourable, as it bears the Image of God; and tho' a wicked Man is a very despicable Creature, yet few Men have so far stained the divine Superscription, but that some Degrees of Reverence will be due to them. And since it is the sacred Volume alone, that has given us a true Account of ourselves, it might be expected that that very Pride which so often leads off the grave Pretender to Philosophy, to prefer his own Imaginations to the inspired Writings, would at length bring him back to reverence the sacred History for the Honour there given to Man, both in his original and final State.

Reason teaches us, that every Resemblance of the divine Nature is entitled to our Esteem, wherever it is found; add to this what Revelation teaches, *That every good and perfect Gift cometh down from above.* One of these Truths will teach us to honour the Man of Knowledge, as representing in some Degree the Wisdom of God, the Man of Authority, his Power; the other will teach the Men
of

of Power and Knowledge, not to overvalue themselves as possessing Excellencies not their own.

But let us observe, above all others, to pay the greatest Honour to the truly good Man, for he it is that gives us the fairest Representation upon Earth, of the great Original in Heaven: As in a Picture that is the best Copy, whose Features are distinct, whose Colours fresh, and whose Air approaches nearest to the Life; so in the Comparison before us, the truly good Man gives us a View of the most intimate and excellent Part of the divine Nature; he lays open the Mind of God to publick View in the Regularity of his Will, and gives us the best Idea of the divine Wisdom, in the Morality of his Actions; he has copied that Attribute which shines with the most distinguish'd Lustre in the Glory of the Godhead, or rather all three great Perfections of his Nature, for in true Goodness there is ever united true Wisdom and Greatness. And he who desires to attain this brightest Side of the divine Image, must first become a Disciple of the holy *Jesus*, who has taught us the only Way to put on the new Man, which, after God, is created in true Holiness.

A Mind thus truly renew'd by the Spirit of God, and exerting itself in all the Parts of a Gospel Charity to Mankind, gives human Nature a greater Ornament than all other polishing in the World without it: And certainly such a Man is the noblest Sight upon Earth, to any one who can discern with any Pleasure the beautiful Colours of genuine Virtue; and he who can treat such an one with Contempt or Derision, may not only be charged with the Want of good Manners, but of Honour towards

wards God, for in such Temples the holy Spirit now dwelleth.

One would imagine that so much Order and Beauty of Action, so much Love to Mankind as flows from the Conduct of a Man regulated by Christian Principles, would ever entitle him to a great Degree of Honour and Esteem in the World; but since we find it much otherwise, from a Generation of Men greatly vitiated in Taste and Principle, it becomes the Christian Magistrate to afford him the utmost Protection from civil Authority: And happy will it be for that Magistrate, that shall ever employ the Authority which God hath given him, in the constant Protection of *God's Children* upon Earth, and in Resentment of the Scorn and Injuries cast upon them by evil Men.

Before I dismiss this Head, I ought to mention the peculiar Care of the poor Man, who is recommended to us in such a Manner, that we are told in holy Scripture, we do Honour to God by relieving him: *He that giveth to the Poor lendeth to the Lord.* And our Saviour tells us, when we visit the Sick, and relieve the Poor in Prison, that he will *accept such Acts of Mercy as done to himself.*

In like Manner, they who pay their Tithe to the Priest, are said *to pay it to God*; and he *who robs the Priest to rob God.* The Truth is, the Priest represents his Master in the Office of Mediator, and the Poor our Saviour in his suffering Humanity; and they are both appointed by God, to receive in his Name those Tributes of Justice and Gratitude, which are due to him on Account of Creation and Preservation, above all Redemption of us by his Son.

We have undeniable Proof, that Mankind from the Beginning offer'd up the Fruits of their Ground, and the Firstlings of their Flocks to the Service of God. From thence we fairly presume that God had appointed they should do so, for this plain Reason, because Nature did not herself teach expressly this Method of honouring God. Under the *Jewish* Institution this Practice is clearly warranted by divine Authority, founded by God on his Right of Creation and Preservation, adding thereto the Redemption from Slavery, and the Possession of the Land of *Canaan* to his People *Israel*.

And as Mankind is still created, preserved and blessed with all the good Things in Life, by a particular indulgent Providence over them; as there is a Covenant offer'd them with God, more honourable and beneficial than was that of *Moses*, don't there remain stronger Reasons why such Methods of devout Acknowledgment to God, are not to cease with the *Jewish* Covenant? When our Saviour says, *Give Alms and all Things are clean unto you*, he plainly teaches us, that God is to be honoured with our Substance, and that the very Use of our Estates is forbidden us, by the Lord of the whole Earth, 'till the whole is sanctify'd by an Offering of Part to him. And since we have the Command of God, nothing can be plainer, than that such Offerings give a stronger Proof of a religious Trust in God, and of the Sincerity of our Love to him, than any Form of Words without them can speak for us.

God's Right of Dominion over us subsisting evermore, we may observe he still continues not only to make his Demand, but to direct the Methods how these our devout Acknowledgments should be paid
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unto him; he telleth us, by his Son, *that he who receiveth the Ministers of his Gospel, receiveth himself; that they who wait at his Altar, are to live by the Altar; that they who preach the Gospel, are to live by the Gospel; that he who is taught in the Word, must communicate unto him that teacheth in all good Things; that as it was ordained for the Ministers of the Altar, even so it is for the Ministers of his Gospel.* Here is abundant Proof that God expects we should go on in all Ages, to dedicate Part of our Substance to the Service of God; and that he may make Provision for the poor Man, the Widow, the Naked, and the Stranger, our Lord takes them likewise under his own immediate Protection, and declares, that whatever good Office we shall do them, out of Love to him, *he will accept as done to himself.*

Some have thought that the Proportion of our Substance to be paid to the Ministers in holy Things, is not expressly measured out in the New Testament. Should we grant it, yet, since Men were first taught to pay the Tributes of Gratitude for Creation and Preservation, and the *Jew* in particular to make very bountiful Returns for his Release from Bondage in *Egypt*; let him that has been created, is daily bleis'd and preserved, that has been so graciously redeemed from Sin and everlasting Destruction, judge himself how far a true Sense of his own Condition will inspire him to abound in all the Parts of this Duty to God: A Refusal, now we are assured from the Bible, that the good God expects this very Proof, amongst others, of the Sincerity of our Obedience to him, is chargeable with Want of Justice

to God and Love to *Jesus Christ*, and indeed an entire Disbelief of both the Testaments.

As these are Principles of honouring God, which the Bible teaches us, one might imagine, that Men, who pretend any Love to Christianity, would be so far from envying the Ministers of the Gospel an honourable Maintenance amongst them, that they would really intreat them to accept it for *Christ's* Sake, and think no Part of their Substance so well employ'd, as thro' pious Offerings made to Persons whom God hath appointed to receive them in his own Name.

But if Men have no regard either to the Old or New Testament, in this Argument, we appeal to the common Sense of all Mankind, who never read the Bible. Prophane History informs us that there never was any Nation in the World, before the coming of *Christ*, that had not Sacrifices in it, and Priests to offer them; and from the Sacrifices the Priests had always a Share for his Maintenance. The *Greek* Writers say, that the most ancient Inhabitants of *Greece* paid the tenth of their Corn and their Cattel to *Hercules*; and so well known in subsequent Ages, was the Custom of paying the tenth Part to the Gods, that the Word *δεκάλογον* is commonly used as a general Term, to express the consecrating their Substance to them. There was a Law in *Rome*, as old as *Numa*, enjoining likewise the Payment of their Tenths to *Hercules*; and *Pliny* says of that People, that it was not lawful amongst them to taste their Wine or their Fruits 'till they had offer'd the *Primitiæ* to the same Deity. Innumerable Instances are taken Notice of, both by the *Greek*
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and *Roman* Writers, of the great Men in both Countries, paying the Tenth Part of all that they possess'd, to one God or another, of their Corn and Wine and Merchandize, of Spoils taken in War, and indeed of every Thing. And 'tis common with them to attribute the Calamities of their Nations, at different Seasons, to a Neglect of paying their Due in this Manner to the Deities. And Rights and Usages like these, are mention'd by good Writers to have been paid by all Nations, and generally too in the tenth Part. If we enquire into the Meaning of these Offerings pay'd to their Deities, we find sufficient Intimation given, that herein the several Nations intended to express the Dominion of the Gods over them; that it was from their Gift they received their Estates, from their Blessing the Encrease of their Labours.

If we go on to ask, from whence such Notions should spread amongst them of honouring God with their Substance, since Nature did not expressly teach it? We cannot answer with those who imagine it to be taken from the *Jews*, for the *Jews* were a very contemptible People to the Heathens; nor is it likely that they should be very fond of borrowing so expensive a Custom as vowing the yearly Tenth of all their Substance to their Gods, because the *Jews* did so: Much less do I like that absurd Notion of others, who tell us, that the *Jews* borrow'd their Customs from their idolatrous Neighbours; for such a Design is plainly contradicted by the very Foundation of the *Jewish* Institution, which was to put a perpetual Separation between them and their Neighbours

in a State of Idolatry. The Truth then seems to be, that the Method of doing Honour to God, by Mens Substance, together with the Institution of the Priesthood and Sacrifices, are the oldest Pieces of Religion in the World; for as they were universally spread over the whole World, before the coming of *Christ*, and no intrinsic Reason possible to be given, why a tenth Part, rather than an eighth or a twelfth should have been paid; there remains no tolerable Account to be given of bringing such Customs into the World, but by the Parent of Mankind, and resolving them back from him to the great Creator of all Things. And tho' the Command might be forgot, in process of Time, in the Heathen World, yet the Practice might afterwards easily subsist upon the Tradition from their Fathers, and the Equity there seem'd to be in paying back Part to the Gods from whom they received the whole.

These Customs universally spread like the common Division of Time into Weeks of seven Days, which plainly wears the Memorial of the Methods of God's creating the World, describ'd by *Moses*, afford us, with some others that I could produce, a very good collateral Proof of the Veracity of the Old Testament. Upon the whole, they who contend for the No-Necessity of offering up a Share of their Substance to the Service of God, betray great Infidelity both to the Old and New Testament; but they argue not more against the Bible, than against the common Sense of the best Men in all Ages; they think as absurdly as many others, who are for no visible Worship of Almighty

mighty God to be instituted amongst us; both which Notions, in my Opinion, plainly discover an Aversion to all Religion whatsoever.

I proceed, in the next Place, to enquire into a particular Method of honouring God, expected from the civil Magistrate, in giving due Protection to Religion, and punishing those who endeavour to subvert it.

In this Argument we may observe, that we are oppos'd by a Set of Writers, who declare against all civil Establishment of any Religion but the Law of Nature; and in the next Place, that an Attempt to subvert the Christian Religion, ought not to subject them to the Punishment of the Civil Magistrate.

In debating these two Propositions, I think it may be undeniably affirm'd, that when different Schemes of Religion are propos'd to the Persons invest'd with the supreme Authority in any State, they have the same natural Right, that any other Man can claim, of following their own Judgments in the Choice of a Religion for themselves.

I think it equally clear, that they must recommend some Scheme of visible Religion to the Subject, some outward Form of the Worship of Almighty God, and that for this plain Reason amongst many others, because a publick Worship of God, in some outward and visible Form, is absolutely necessary for the very Being of Society; for if you take away these outward Forms, by which Men shew to one another that they worship God, they will then give no visible Proof to one another, that they believe in God; the Consequence

sequence of which will be, that there will arise, in such a Society, a mutual Distrust of one anothers Faith, Justice, Sincerity.

Publick Forms of Worship are not only necessary Parts of Duty to God, as they do him the greatest Honour and preserve a due Sense of Religion in the World above all other, but an Adherence to them gives us generally the best Tests to judge of Mens inward Regard to any Belief in God at all. And if Men are not willing to shew by some publick Worship of God, that they believe in God, no one in the Society will think it safe to give such much Credit in Matters of Commerce with them; and when a general Distrust of one another is introduced amongst Mankind, all the Benefits of Society are at once dissolv'd. I appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, whether this be not true; and whether the Generality of Mankind do not suspect that Man, whom they see to live in an open Disregard to, or Defiance of all visible Worship of Almighty God, to have his Heart not *rightly* disposed to any Belief in God at all.

I know in this Age, where Men make large Professions of their Honour, they will take it very ill, if their Honour does not procure them an universal Esteem and Credit in the World. But what do Men by mean their Honour? Surely we have all the Proof that Experience can give us, that Honour is nothing but a mere Creature of the Imagination, of no real Use in Life, unless it be to deceive Mankind, when 'tis not founded on true Principles of Religion. And if Men have founded that Honour on true Principles of Religion,

on, on a Belief that God will Reward their Virtue, and punish their Iniquity in a future State; they must resolve to go one Step farther, and habituate themselves to some publick Worship of Almighty God; otherwise an invisible and secret Sense only of the Deity cannot raise any Trust in the Minds of others, that they entertain any inward Regard to God himself: For in a Socity of Men united together, under a common Belief, that there is a Religion expressly revealed from Heaven, and that this Religion has instituted a publick Worship of Almighty God, a Stander by will be necessarily led to think, that he who complies with no visible Form of divine Worship, has no real Religion at all.

Some outward Form of the Worship of Almighty God, is then absolutely necessary for Society, were there no other Reasons, but to convince Mankind that we sincerely believe in God. And if some outward Form of Worship be necessary, then some publick Provision of Laws and Rules for Ministers to celebrate this visible Worship, and the like, are equally necessary. Join these Things together, and we are got already to our Conclusion, which is, that a civil Establishment of Religion is necessary for Society; for a national Provision for the outward Worship of Almighty God, by civil Authority, join'd with proper Laws and Rules, and Ministers to attend upon it, is creating at once what we mean by the Establishment of Religion by civil Authority.

'Tis an allow'd Maxim in Government, that the supreme Magistracy is the final Judge of, and may freely make use of all lawful Expedients necessary

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to govern the People withal, committed to their Care; in which Number, we are warranted from the best Experience in human Life, to insert a visible Establishment of the publick Worship of Almighty God, which publick Provision stands confirm'd by the Authority of God himself, in a well known Instance, and is recommended to us from the great Founders of Empires, and the Wisdom of all the Lawgivers in every State that ever were in the World : Which Argument one would imagine, would silence, at least, the Freethinkers ; but since no Reason or Example will convince such Men, we may presume, that no Government will be willing to gratify them, contrary to all true Sense of Religion to all Reasons of publick Utility, and contrary to the Judgment of the wisest Men that ever were in the World.

Hitherto the Conclusion seems to stand clear of all Exception; let us go on to observe, that when they, who have the supreme Authority in civil Society, have settled some Scheme of publick Worship of Almighty God, if they find such a Provision greatly to advance the Welfare of Society, may they not go on to recommend it to the hearty Opinion of the Subject, and encourage it by all such Marks as are legally in their own Power ? May not such a Power, in any State, appoint Persons for, and Places of publick Instruction, in the Reasons and Grounds of such Worship ? May not Persons, invested with supreme Authority, honour and reward the Subjects, according to the Love and Honour they pay to their own establish'd Manner of religious Worship ? 'Tis very natural to think they should do so, the publick
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Happiness of the State requires it of them; and if they believe that their own Religion is the only true Way of honouring God, they will think it their Duty as well as Interest, to entrust all the great Offices of State in the Hands of such Persons, as are eminently distinguish'd for their Love to it; they will likewise make such honourable Provision for the Ministers of it, as shall engage Men of Learning and Abilities, to dedicate their Lives, to the immediate Service of it; that each of these, by the Dignity of their Station, and the Holiness of their Lives, may reflect back some Honour and Credit upon that Religion, which they have thought it their Duty to establish by civil Authority.

If after such Methods of publick Instruction taken, Part of the Subjects cannot conform, no one absolutely requires under Pain of corporal or any civil Punishments, that they should; for I am not contending for violent Compulsions to a particular Persuasion in Religion, because I know that a true Sense of Religion must arise, in a great Measure, from an inward Conviction of Mind, to which an outward Compulsion will offer no Motive. If Men then, thro' Consciences truly scrupulous, ask for a Permission to enjoy their own Opinion with Freedom, they shall have my Leave heartily to have it; but farther than this, I can see no Reason that a Government can be ask'd with Reason to grant; for tho' no Government can justly take away Mens natural Rights, in which Number I place that of private Opinion; yet let a Man shew me if he can, that there is any Claim in the Law of Nature or civil Society, to

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ridicule others in the Enjoyment of their Opinion actively to insult the Religion of the Prince, the Nobility and the far greater Part of the People of the Society. To contend for such a Power, is to challenge a Power of dissolving the fundamental Bonds on which the very Peace and Order of Society is united; and therefore every Dictate of Nature, every Bond of civil Society resist and refute it.

Let us go on to suppose, that a certain Method of publick divine Worship has engaged the supremè Magistracy, the Nobility, and all the higher Orders of the State on its Side; that it has pass'd the Vote of the People themselves, legally represented; that by long Experience it has been found to yield a noble Support to civil Society in the several Doctrines which it teaches; and that no Part of the establish'd Religion can be charged with bringing any Injury to the rational or social Nature of Man; that for these and many other Reasons, it has been gradually riveted by Custom and express Law, into the very Frame of the civil Constitution it self, 'till at length every Subject of such State may claim a Right to the open Profession of such Religion, every Minister of it, his Reward for his Service, in the same Manner they claim any other Right, upon the Foot of a legal and civil Establishment: When Matters have been thus gradually and maturely settled, can it be expected that the supreme Authority, in such a State, should suspend a noble and salutary Provision, for publick Peace and Safety, every Time old Exceptions, that have been clearly answer'd over and over, are made to this Scheme, or whenever a few Patrons of avowed Licentiousness,

ness, shall harangue the People against all civil Establishment of any visible Religion whatever? Shall it become the Wisdom of the Government to pull down Churches, and dissolve a publick Provision for the Ministers of Religion, in order to gratify a few selfish Men?

So tender have all civiliz'd Nations been of the Ministers of the national Religion, that they have ever granted them special Immunities above the rest of the Subjects: And the *Roman* Law went so far as to except the Things consecrated to the Service of Religion, out of the ordinary Rules of Prescription to the Property of others *.

And *Cicero* goes farther yet, and declares, that it was the common Law of all Nations, that no Prescription whatever shall give a just Possession to any Property once belonging to the immortal Gods †.

By such and many other special Indulgences, the several Governments of the World intended to give a peculiar Protection to the Religion of their Countries, an Establishment of which, they imagined, did so much Honour to God, and derived so great Happiness to the People.

And if we consider this Matter aright, it is very clear, that to dissolve a national Provision for the Ministers of a national Religion, carries in it an Attempt to dissolve one Bond of the national Church: For as there can be no national Religion, without Ministers to celebrate it, so I presume it will not be expected that Men should

* See Digest. l. xli. t. 3. leg. 9.

† Communi jure Gentium sancitum est, ut nihil mortales a Diis immortalibus usu capere possint. *Orat. de Harusp. Responsis.*

dedicate their whole Time to the Service of the Altar, without an honourable Maintenance. Take away then the national Provision for the Ministers of Religion, and the national Religion drops with it: This, I know, will be thought by some to be a great Blessing, to have a Nation without a Priest in it; but then you see it is such a Blessing, as to have a Nation without any visible Religion, or visible publick Worship of Almighty God in it. Upon the whole, if Men have any Exceptions to make to the Christian Religion, in any of its Branches, when they do it with good Manners, in that decent and serious Way which becomes an Enquiry concerning Truths of the last Importance to Mankind, no one, I believe, will be offended; but then by the same Rule in Equity, that the Persons invested with supreme Authority in this Kingdom, are obliged to hear all that can be said against the civil Establishment of Christianity, they must hear all that can be said for it; and then it must rest upon the Judgment of the supreme Authority to determine the Dispute. And if the supreme Authority of this Nation, does not revoke its present civil Establishment of Religion, nor the Provision for its Ministers, 'till our Governors have heard all that can be said for both of them, 'till they have heard how much the Honour of God and the Happiness of Mankind, have in all Ages, and will evermore depend upon them, we may conclude, that the present State of Things will continue as long as the most affectionate Friend of both can desire.

'Tis certainly a just Observation, that true Religion fears no impartial Examination; and I hope I may

may say, without Offence, that great Acknowledgments are due to the two great Nurseries of this Kingdom, which have furnish'd the Nation with great Numbers of learned and religious Men, who are willing and able to satisfy the Scruples of those who ask it of them with Reverence: But how shall we hope to convince those Men, who instead of Reason and Argument, return Ridicule, Satyr and Blasphemy upon all instituted Methods of Religion amongst us? When we desire nothing more of them, than a serious Debate, concerning the Evidences of our dear Redeemer's Mission, we are left to read their Wit, rudely pointed at the several Parts of his sacred Character; and nothing more common than to see all the Blessings of the Gospel openly derided. Nothing in the World is a plainer Truth, than that all imaginable Pains are taken with great Numbers amongst us, both in Writing and Conversation, to spread a general Reproach on all the Orders of the Christian Ministry, and, if possible, to destroy the small Remains of that religious Regard that is due to Things and Persons sacred, still, God be thank'd, subsisting amongst us.

In such a corrupt Generation of Men, what room is left for private Reproof; what Hopes of Reformation by sober Reasoning? And lest the inspired Writings should remain in any Degree of Purity amongst us, a new Version of them has been lately publish'd, by an Hand who seems industriously to have corrupted them in many Places, and has put the whole into such ridiculous Language, that it seems contriv'd on purpose to lessen the Reverence for them, amongst the common
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People, and to create endless Divisions in the different Sects of Believers subsisting amongst us.

When Men are arrived to such Heights of Impiety and Lewdness, that neither Reason, good Manners, nor any true Sense of Religion will restrain them, I cannot help thinking, with an excellent Writer *, who has gone before me in this Argument, that the civil Authority may, with the strictest Equity, interpose in such Cases; and if he finds no other gentler Method will do, may (if he pleases) stop the Progress of Mischief by some salutary Punishment; for 'tis most evident there can be no Breach of any Right in Nature or civil Society, to stop a Man from offending the Society, and doing Mischief to others. And if the Dispute should arise, whether they do Mischief to Society or no, by a rude Insult on the Christian Religion, and the Ministers of it; surely the civil Magistrate must be allowed to be the Judge, on whose Protection the Safety of the Society entirely depends. Such a Restraint from the Magistrate, besides the Safety it brings along with it to the Society, puts mischievous Men into a State of the greatest Felicity they are capable of in this World; I mean an happy Necessity of not being able to hurt others besides themselves.

A Confinement to a Man who is ever using his Liberty to do Mischief, is therefore the greatest Indulgence you can shew him; for which indulgent Treatment, such a Man, thus treated, will have great Reason to thank the civil Magistrate, when he shall return to a right Use of his Understanding again. Upon the whole, if we re-

* *Dr. Rogers in his Vindication of the civil Establishment.*

member the Proof already given, that no Government ever did, or can subsist without due Protection given to some visible Worship of Almighty God in it, it will appear, that he who shall insult the establish'd Religion, or deny to the Magistrate the Power of protecting such visible Worship of God, by civil Authority, does the very same Thing as if he did, in so many Words, deny him the Power of preserving the Government committed to his Charge. Each Opinion therefore strikes equally at the Foundation both of the civil and religious Society of this Kingdom: And how such Opinions, openly maintain'd and propagated in the World, ought to be answer'd, I leave to any sober man to judge.

The learned *Grotius*, who is the most cautious Writer in the World of advising the Execution of unnecessary or unjust Penalties upon our fellow Creatures, as well knowing, to put our fellow Creatures to Pain, without the last Necessity, is contrary to the great Law of Benevolence we owe to Mankind: This great Man has undeniably maintain'd, that they who teach there is no God, or a divine Providence over us, ought to be banish'd out of human Society *. I need not produce his Reasons for this Opinion; the Reason, I think, is plain enough.

How then shall many Libertines of the present Age convince the World, that they believe in a divine Providence taking care of human Affairs, when they offer up no visible Worship to him; nay, indeed, take all the Pains in the World to ridicule those that do? For let us consider this Mat-

* See his *Treatise De Jure Belli*, &c. Book II. chap. 20.

ter a little. If God takes care of me, ought not I to thank him for it, and beseech the Continuance of his Protection over me? But if he does not take care of me, by a special Providence, then God has nothing to do with me in this World, nor I then with him; and so under such a Belief, all Religion in the World ceases at once. If the Deist will therefore pay no visible Worship to God, let him convince the World, if he can, that he believes in a particular divine Providence, taking care of all human Affairs; and if he does not entertain such a Notion of a divine Providence, he may pretend what he pleases, but he must excuse me, if I declare such an one an Atheist; and I have the Authority of his own Scriptures, the Writings of *Cicero*, for calling him so.

To conclude this Head. It is not not my Province in this Argument, to enquire into Mens private Opinions, and therefore I shall dismiss it, with observing, that to me it seems a very plain Truth, that if wicked Men will go on to ridicule openly, or any Way publickly insult the Religion, or publick Method of divine Worship establish'd by civil Authority in this Kingdom, the civil Power may give a Check to it, with the strictest Justice; for if it cannot prevent, or has not Authority to stop the Wickedness of Men, insulting the Religion of this Nation, by civil Punishments, when all other Methods are not able to do it, then the great Blessing of civil Protection over the Church ceases, at a Time when, and in those Instances where there is most Occasion for its Service.

To the Authority of the civil Power, in such Cases already alledg'd, the Case of *Eli*, under the
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Jewish Institution, is a Case directed by God himself, and what was once directed by God himself, cannot be in its own Nature sinful. And the same Power that God gave to godly Princes in holy Scripture, is sufficiently declared to belong to the supreme civil Authority of this Nation *: And does not the Authority of St. *Paul* confirm it, where he calls the *higher Powers Revengers from God to execute Wrath upon them that do Evil*? For surely none can do more Mischief in a Christian Country, than they who insult the holy Character of *Jesus Christ*, wilfully adulterate his Gospel, abuse his Ministers, because they are his Ministers, or would root out of human Society the publick Worship of Almighty God establish'd in it.

I shall now examine the Plea of Conscience pretended in the World, actively to oppose the Religion of *Jesus Christ*.

Those Men, who tell us they are bound in Conscience to oppose Christianity, seem to me, to have Consciences much like those, who teach Mankind that they are not bound to worship God at all. Both these Kinds of Consciences we have lived to see pretended in the World. I for my Part, after such Declarations, shall not be surpris'd, if I should hear these Men go on to profess they think themselves bound in Conscience not to believe in God at all; for there is so strict a Connexion between the Belief of a God and a divine Providence, and our Duty to worship him, that he who can break thro' one Link of the Chain, I allow may destroy the whole.

* See the 37th Article of our Church.

But let us hear the Plea of Conscience pretended to oppose Christianity. The Argument is offer'd to the World under the general Law of Benevolence to Mankind, to deliver them from Imposture and Superstition. Such Kind of Writers in their Addresses to the People, paint Superstition under all the most terrible Shapes, in order to frighten the People with them, telling them that wherever it spreads, it will do more Mischief than Famine or the Sword. All this may be true, but it happens to be little to the Purpose; for if they do not mean Christianity by it, why such popular Harangues upon Superstition in a Christian Country? And if they do mean Christianity by it, they should first answer the Arguments brought in Proof of its divine Authority, before they give it that Term of Reproach; besides, what Mischief can the true Practice of that Religion bring to the World, which is exactly fitted to the rational and social Nature of Man? And, I think, we may challenge them to prove how any of its Doctrines can really injure the Man that obeys it, or his Neighbours about him, in any one Instance; for it has been abundantly proved by many Writers, that the Christian Religion carries an internal Proof of its Divinity, by the amiable Tendency of all its Doctrines to Mankind. The just Complaint of Injury done to Mankind, lies therefore not against the Belief of Christianity, but them only that take Pains to destroy it.

Before Men pretend to a Rule of Conscience, they should be ready to shew some Law either of Nature or Revelation, into which the pretended Rule of Conscience may be resolved; and if there
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is no such Law of Nature, which is the whole of our Infidel's pretended Religion, then we beseech him to remember a Law of Nature, which teaches him to obey his Superiors in all Cases, not contrary to the Law of his Religion. And I own, for my self, I cannot find out a Law of Nature for opposing the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, whose Religion undoubtedly teaches every Law of uncorrupted Nature to the greatest Perfection. A Christian indeed believes in a great deal more than mere Nature teaches; but then they are such Opinions as hurt no Body; they are such Opinions, which tho' not discoverable by his Reason, are highly agreeable to it; they are such Opinions as serve to mortify his Passions, support him under Affliction, and can yield the only safe Comfort to the repenting Sinner: Of such are the Terms of our Acceptance with God, with many others contained in the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. What Charity therefore is it to disturb such Men, and give them no Equivalent for it? And after all this Noise in the World, about the Religion of Nature, we have abundant Proof that it could never long subsist without putting it on the Foot of a divine positive Command; for take away the divine positive Command, and with it the Certainty of eternal Rewards and Punishments prescribed by the Gospel, and then the Religion of Nature will remain such a System of Opinions, as every Man pleases to call the Religion of Nature. In such a State what endless Disputes must arise about the pretended Religion of Nature, wherein no Man can claim the Prerogative of prescribing to others; and when there is no set-

tled Rule to decide Mens Differences in Opinion; can it be expected that there will remain much Harmony in Matters of Religion, or without it much Peace or Happiness in Society? Sir *William Temple* well observes, that when private Men pretend Conscience for opposing a reasonable establish'd Religion in a Country, without the undisputed Evidence of a special Mission from Heaven, they may justly be suspected to oppose it, not for God's Sake, but their own. In conformation of which, we may observe, that the Patrons of an universal Latitude of Opinion, are continually preaching up to the People the Blessings of an unbounded Liberty, both in the religious and civil Polity of this Kingdom. But is this done that Men may enjoy it? I believe not, nor I trust does any sober Man wish to see it; but then they are to be suspected of a Design of courting the Honour and Interest of the People, by such a pleasing Plea set before them, that by such Steps they may make Way for their own Sovereignty over them.

This general Truth should direct the supreme Authority of any State, to be watchful over those who are spreading such specious Policy amongst the People; and since no genuine Law, either of Nature or Revelation, can be produced to ground the Argument upon, of actively opposing Christianity established in this Kingdom, I leave the Argument with the supreme Magistrate, to make the Judgment, whether they may take any more Notice of the Libertine's Plea, than they would do of the Pleas of an erroneous Conscience, pretended for the Destruction of any other dear and valuable Establishment in the Society.

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What I have here observed, about the several Methods by which God may be duly honour'd in the World, I have drawn, to the best of my Judgment, from divine Revelation, such as honouring God in the Persons of the King, the Priest and all good Men, thro' the civil Protection to be given to divine Revelation, and thro' good Offices to be done to the Sick and Needy, for our dear Redeemer's Sake. And I sincerely think that such Sentiments well cultivated amongst us, would not do more Honour to the holy Name of God, than they would bring Peace and Safety to all the Members of Society; for it seems to be a very plain Truth, that unless Royal Majesty on the one Hand, and the Ministers of the Gospel on the other, be received in the World with that Reverence, which is prescrib'd by the Principles of Christianity, neither of them can subsist long in any Degree of Esteem amongst us: And since they who are Enemies to the one, seldom fail to despise the other, this, in my humble Opinion, should suggest to Princes an useful Piece of innocent Policy, which is, to protect evermore all the Rights of the Clergy, to the best of their Power; and to the Clergy to use their best Endeavours to give the Honour that is due, in all Respects, to the sacred Character of Princes.

I proceed, in the last Place, to shew what Kind of Honour God will bestow upon those who endeavour to honour him.

When God says in the Scripture Language, that he will *honour* a People, by it we understand, that he promises to bestow the Blessings both of this and a future State upon them: And this his Religion, which he has given the World, will do
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for them, by the natural Tendency of every Grace and Virtue in it. The Virtues of Faith, Justice, Sincerity, create a mutual Confidence in Men to one another, which is the first great Cement of Society; the various Branches of a Gospel Charity dispose Men to forgive, soften their Passions and convert the Confidence in one another, flowing from Justice and Sincerity into universal Love. So in private Life, Idleness and Luxury bring forth Poverty, tempt Men to Injustice; and when this is practised in great Numbers, there grows from such Stocks the greatest Calamity that can befall a Nation, in a Race of Children, tainted, sickly, unfit for the common Labours of Life, and the Support of Society. The World is certainly the better for every Virtue of the Gospel practised in it, and much the worse for the Commission of any Vice forbidden by it: And if any one thinks fit to deny this, let him name a Duty prescrib'd in the Gospel, that either hurts the Man that obeys it, or his Neighbours about him. And there is such Provision made in our holy Religion, for the *Honour* of Authority, and the Love of the People to it, and to one another, that I am confident, were the Principles it inspires, the Enforcements it adds to human Laws, the Strength it yields to the whole Frame of civil Society, banish'd out of the World, Government would be far more difficult than it is; it would want its best and most firm Foundation. Therefore the civil Authority in every Nation, should be very tender of the Honour of God, and of preserving his Religion, were there no other Reasons, yet from Reasons of publick Utility.

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For the same Reason the civil Governors should highly honour the Ministers of this true Religion, looking upon them, as indeed they are, Men greatly assisting to the civil Magistrate, in the due Government of the World: For every well regulated Parish, according to Gospel Principles, are undoubtedly the best Subjects in civil Society, the best Neighbours, the best Friends, and the best Men in it. That Religion therefore does thus fit Man, both in a single and social State, that we are entitled to such Happiness by it, here and hereafter; the one was the pure original Gift of God, who made us in such a Manner that it should be so; the other was, after our own Forfeiture of it, the Purchase of his Son for us. The Happiness therefore, which we are wont to say, ariseth naturally to us from its Fitness to our Nature, flow'd from the good Pleasure of Almighty God, and therefore must be acknowledg'd with all Gratitude, to be a singular Act of his own great Honour bestow'd upon us already, as well as the other to be confer'd upon us hereafter.

But when God says, he will *Honour* a People, in this Promise is contain'd yet a higher Degree of Honour, I mean the Interposition of his own Arm and Strength for them, beyond what their own Eyes could foresee, or their own Arm execute: 'Tis the universal Language of holy Scripture, that God hath committed the Government of his People on Earth, to *inferior Gods* under him; but then not so far committed it to them, as to exclude himself from the Government of the World; for out of the same divine Writings we learn, that God governs all Things, not by a
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general but particular Providence; *not only Fire and Hail, Wind and Storm fulfil his Orders*, in deriving Health and Plenty, Famine and Pestilence, but in like Manner the Counsels, the Actions and the Passions of Men, all serve the Ends of his governing Providence: *There are many Devices in a Man's Heart, nevertheless the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand* *. And tho' all these particular Movements Men may call their own, as flowing from a free Principle within themselves, yet in the Execution of them, they certainly serve the Ends of his Providence: They shall assist, bless or punish, where God would assist, bless or punish, and no farther. If this was not true, Man might bless where God would punish, or punish where God would bless; by these Means God would lose all Government of the World, and then all our Trust, our Hope in God, and the Ground of our Prayers to him would cease together with it.

Fix this Government of Providence over us aright, for hereon all true Notion of Religion depends, and we can easily understand God, when he tells the *Jews*, *that Promotion cometh neither from the East nor from the West, but 'tis himself that pulleth down one King, and setteth up another: That it was he that sent abroad the Sword and the Pestilence for the Execution of his own Orders*, that he should proportion his Punishments of this World to their Sins, and his Blessings to their Steadfastness in Religion. The whole History of the *Jews* is one continued Proof of this Truth: And tho' God did many Times interpose by Miracles

* Prov. xix. 21.

in their favour, yet this was done, not because he could not bless or punish them without a Miracle, but the low State of Religion, many Times, amongst them, and a lower yet amongst their Idolatrous Neighbours, made it necessary so openly to manifest, that there was a watchful God over the whole World, and that he was more peculiarly present to his People *Israel*: All which, since the plentiful Effusion of Miracles, and the Publication of the Knowledge of God by *Jesus Christ*, has been made less necessary. But then the same God does as certainly govern, bless or punish Nations now, by the Means of ordinary Occurrences, as he did of old in the more legible Characters of a Succession of Miracles. If this be true, and that it is so, we have clear Evidence of revealed Religion,

Then are all the Nations of the Earth taught the only Way to bring down the Blessings from Heaven, or know when to expect God's national Judgments: Then will national Protection of Christian Faith, doing publick Honours to God, in his Name, his Word, his Worship, his Priests, his Authority and Goodness, wherever 'tis placed, derive the one; as a general Contempt and Ridicule of the Honour and Worship due to the Holy Trinity; a national Love of the Pleasures, the Riches, and the Honours of this World, greater than the Love of God, open Blasphemy and Profaneness, and a general Derision of Things and Persons sacred, call down his Scourges. Under a deep Sense of these Truths, did all the pious Kings of *Israel* vanquish their Enemies, and quietly govern their People at home. And thus in our

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own Nation, will the Name of a late gracious Princess shine evermore in the Annals of Fame; not only by sending great Fleets and Armies abroad to stop the Growth of arbitrary Power, but rather by calling in the divine Assistance on her Counsels, thro' her own special Concern for Religion at home, her own true Faith, her own fervent and constant Devotion; and on the other Hand, thro' a general Coldness to the Christian Religion, many, once famous Cities of the East, entirely lost their Religion and their Liberty together. And thus it ever was, and ever will be, over all the Nations of the Earth; so long as they support true Religion, true Religion will support them with its natural and supernatural Assistance. And if we look into the Reason of this divine Dispensation, we shall find it founded on the divine Rectitude, making that Love or Hatred to Virtue and Vice, and his own revealed Religion, the Unchangeable Measure of his Love and Hatred to them. And tho' this cannot be said in a strict Degree with Regard to private Persons in this World, the Wisdom of his Government not requiring that he should convert this their State of Tryal into a State of equal Rewards and Punishments; yet with regard to Communities of Men it is otherwise; for they, as Societies of Men, must receive the national Blessings of Honour, Victory, Peace, and the like, here, or not at all. Besides, there is something so outrageous and insolent in large Combinations of Wickedness, that the Justice and Honour of God seems concern'd to interpose, lest his Authority should be too far trampled upon by the Overflowings of Iniquity.

But

But whilst we are making Provision for Future Happinefs, let us not forget the Honours of God already confer'd upon this Church and Nation; the many seasonable Interpositions of divine Favour in Times of great Extremity, with Regard to both of them.

Let us be thankful, that we are not now struggling under the Yoke of arbitrary Power, or that the Frame of our Constitution is not broken to Pieces by the wild Rage of Anarchy and Confusion.

Let us adore the Goodness of divine Providence, in placing a great Guardian over us, whom we have seen using his constant Endeavours to protect our Religion, the Rights of the Clergy, and the legal Property of every Subject; from whose Regard to Piety and Learning have flow'd generous Marks of a Royal Munificence to this great Nursery of ingenuous Education.

In one Word, Let us bless Almighty God, that by his Royal Consort's Goodness, join'd with his own, we can behold a numerous Royal Progeny educated in our holy Faith; from whence we justly conclude, that these valuable Blessings will be made secure to us and our Posterity.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 12. line 23. for *has* read *have*. P. 14. l. 16. for *Man* read *Mankind*. P. 20. l. 16. for *that* read *their*. P. 27. l. 8. for *Due* read *Dues*. P. 30. l. 28. for *by mean* read *mean by*. P. 44. l. 19. for *Conformation* read *Confirmation*.



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